**PRESS RELEASE**

Powering infrastructure development in Africa

***(Date), 2015:*** *The bulk of infrastructure development funding in Africa is allocated to power and energy. In addition, the South African government’s highly successful Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement (REIPPP) programme is perceived globally as a model for private-sector investment in public infrastructure. This has paved the way for companies such as SMEC play an increasingly vital role in these sectors.*

The REIPPP programme has provided an important springboard for opportunities in base load, cogeneration and gas-to-energy power, **Andre van der Walt**, Functional Head, Power and Energy at SMEC South Africa comments. “It is also an indication of the market appetite for such projects, and has opened a gateway into Africa for us.”

SMEC power and energy capabilities encompass all stages of project completion, from project inception through to delivery, including feasibility studies, front-end engineering, modelling and analysis, engineering design, procurement, contract management, construction supervision, quality assurance and operation and maintenance.

SMEC has a capability in high, medium and low-voltage transmission and distribution systems, including secondary systems, telecoms, SCADA as well as civil and structural work. “We have a team of professional engineers and registered project managers that work closely with our clients to drive technical excellence and project success,” van der Walt notes.

In the planning and development of power systems, SMEC identifies, evaluates and recommends the most appropriate and holistic option for specific customer requirements. This includes looking at system optimisation options, protection studies and stability analyses, the design of generator grid connections and even power security studies.

In terms of project execution, SMEC South Africa can undertake both preliminary and detailed designs, tailoring project solutions to local needs by leveraging off its global expertise and experience. “We integrate innovative global best practice into local customer-focused solutions,” van der Walt notes. “SMEC South Africa understands local tendering and procurement practices, enabling efficient technical and commercial evaluation of contractor bids.”

Van der Walt points out that SMEC South Africa adheres to PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge) guidelines to drive its projects from planning to successful completion. “We are experienced in all facets of power engineering management, from construction supervision through to network management and institutional capacity building, thereby ensuring effective implementation and continued operational excellence.”

SMEC’s hydropower expertise ranges from the successful delivery of 5 kW micro projects to 8 000 MW high-capital multi-disciplinary mega projects. Van der Walt points out that SMEC was one of the original players in the renewable-energy sector, with the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme in Australia. This expertise has culminated in SMEC South Africa contributing front-end engineering services to a number of developers and contractors involved with the REIPPP programme.

“Not only have we strategically positioned ourselves in this field, but the power and energy division is doing very well in Africa at the moment,” van der Walt highlights. “There is a plethora of projects, of which some are being supported from South Africa.” These include a 132 kV network feasibility study underway in Uganda and a 220 kV mining substation extension in Botswana.

Key renewable energy projects currently undertaken by SMEC South Africa include implementing an energy-efficiency retrofit programme and photovoltaic system installation at four Trans Africa Concessions (TRAC) toll plazas, each with a capacity of between 30 kVA and 45 kVA. “We have been commissioned to provide a further two such systems,” van der Walt reveals.

***Ends***

**Notes to the Editor**
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**About SMEC South Africa**
SMEC South Africa provides consultancy services for the lifecycle of a project to a broad range of sectors. These include hydropower, transport, water, natural resources and environment, geotechnical, mining, tunnelling, urban development, renewable energy, power, government and advisory services and social infrastructure development. The SMEC Group has over 5 300 employees and an established network of over 75 offices throughout Australia, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific, North and South America.

**Media Contact**
Gerhard Hope
NGAGE Public Relations
Phone: (011) 867-7763
Fax: 086 512 3352
Cell: 078 824 8723
Email: gerhard@ngage.co.za
Web: [www.ngage.co.za](http://www.ngage.co.za/)

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